



State Senator

February 27, 2004

VALDE GARCIA

Serving the 22nd District

Shiawassee-Livingston-southern Ingham counties

Coffee Break News

Senator Garcia to examine backlog in unemployment benefits

Senator Garcia and members of the Michigan Senate want to know why Michigan workers are still facing a backlog in unemployment benefits. Several Senate offices have been inundated with calls from citizens begging for help. More than a year ago, the Department of Labor and Economic Growth outlined the steps it was taking to correct customer service problems that were hindering Michigan's unemployment system. They expected to have the issues resolved last fall, but late benefit payments continue to plague Michigan workers. Now the Senate wants to know why. Hearings will be held, and the Senate will ask the state Auditor General to conduct a performance audit of the department.

Tax refund can be donated to cancer research fund

The Senate this week passed legislation to establish "Amanda's Fund for Breast Cancer Research" and to allow individuals to donate to the fund when they pay their taxes. Residents would be able to designate on their annual tax return that a contribution of \$2 or more of their refund be credited to the research fund. Money donated to the fund will be used to promote research in Michigan relating to breast cancer. The program will be run by the Department of Community Health and will begin in 2005. Senate bills 581 and 582 now head to the House for consideration.

March is Reading Month

"March is Reading Month" and we would like to take this opportunity to remind you to read to your children or encourage them to read to you. After all, reading is the foundation for success in school and in life. Reading together can help children learn and develop a love of reading that will last a lifetime. It also gives parents and children the chance to explore new worlds together. According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 40 percent of students across our nation cannot read at a basic level. Help your child open the door to a life full of wonder and opportunity -- celebrate Reading Month and read together! If you are interested in encouraging your children to read more often, follow these reading tips recommended by educators:

- * Read to your child every day.
- * Encourage your child to read to you.
- * Help your child get a library card and use it often.
- * Give a book as a gift for birthdays and special occasions.
- * Keep books and newspapers in a prominent place in your home.
- * Read! Let your child see how much you value reading.